



# Respect

### BIG IDEA(S):

- What is a personal statement?
- What is networking and why is it important?

### WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

- Scrap paper
- Personal Statement (2 pages)
- Networking Toolkit (2 pages)
- UCONN's Networking 101 [video](#), to project
- Device with ability to project video
- Devices with Internet access, at least enough for half of the participants

### OVERVIEW

In this third session, young people will consider what makes them unique as they begin developing their personal statements. They will then learn about the practice of networking, and they will prepare a toolkit that prepares them to begin networking for future educational and career opportunities.

### BEFORE YOU BEGIN

- Print and copy the handouts listed in the *What You Will Need* section so there are enough copies for each participant.
- Gather and prepare the devices listed in the *What You Will Need* section for leader and participant use.
- Read through the activity to make sure you understand the directions before the session begins.

### ENGAGE

- Begin by passing out scrap paper and encouraging the young people to tear it into three strips.
- Then provide the following prompt: *Imagine that a newspaper wants to write three different headlines about you. Each one needs to be true, eye-catching, and illustrate in a positive way how you stand out from those around you. What would each one say?*
- Give everyone a few minutes to write their headlines.
- Then you may either:
  - have the young people share their headlines in small groups, or
  - collect the headlines and read several aloud while encouraging the rest of the class to guess who each one is about.

## EXPLORE

1. Explain that when applying for college and jobs, those making the decisions (such as the college admissions counselors or the hiring committees) only get a glimpse of who we are. Like a headline, the information they *do* receive must be eye-catching, important, and make them want to find out more!
2. Tell everyone that today they will be focusing on two main ways to communicate their uniqueness to decision-makers.
3. Explain that one way to catch the eye of colleges they want to attend is through the personal statement portion of a college application.

For those who may not know what a personal statement is, elaborate by explaining that a personal statement is an opportunity to tell admissions officers a story about yourself. It reflects your thoughts, feelings, and insights based on your own personal experiences, and it gives you a chance to teach the reader something about you that can't be learned by reading the other parts of your application. For this reason, it is important to spend time on your personal statement so it showcases you as much as possible!

4. Distribute one **Personal Statement handout** to each young person, and explain that this checklist can be used to help students think about the talents, skills, abilities, and experiences that have shaped them and make them unique.
5. Have everyone spend time working on the handout's *Prewrite* section. Then encourage the young people to keep the handout in a safe place so they can use it at a later time when they begin writing their personal statements.
6. Next, introduce the idea of networking. Explain that while personal statements are a way to reach people you do not know and likely will never meet, networking is all about creating, building, and maintaining relationships—with the goal of eventually being able to help each other in an educational or professional capacity.
7. Show the first couple minutes of UCONN's Networking 101 [video](#) and encourage viewers to listen for key words that further describe what networking is.
8. Discuss some of the key words and concepts that the young people heard. Then pass out one **Networking Toolkit handout** to each young person. Encourage them to work in pairs to complete Step 1 and review the directions provided before they begin.
9. Once about 15 minutes has passed, take a moment to review the directions for Steps 2 and 3. Once pairs have finished Step 1, encourage them to complete the remaining sections individually.
10. When their Networking Toolkit handouts are complete, have pairs regroup and encourage them to share their plans with each other. If time permits, pairs may role-play their networking meetings.
11. Wrap up with a full-group discussion around the following questions:
  - How may writing your personal statement prepare you for networking?
  - What are the benefits of networking?
  - What role does respect play in networking?
  - What may you find most difficult about networking, and how could you overcome this?

## MAKE THE CONNECTION

While networking can be a great way to learn more about careers that already interest you, it can also be a great way to discover STEM careers and opportunities that you had no idea even existed. The majority of jobs are now found through networking, so be as open-minded as you can throughout your networking experiences. You never know where they may lead!

## EXTEND AND EVALUATE

Do you meet more than once a month? In an upcoming session, you could:

- Hold a couple follow-up work sessions in which the young people continue on to the “Draft” and “Revise” sections of the **Personal Statement handout**. They can then help each other edit their work before it is submitted!
- Have young people develop tips and work-arounds for some of the trickier parts of networking, such as how to combat shyness or how to meet in a virtual environment.
- Invite professionals to attend a session for real-life networking practice. Give the young people time to prepare in advance, so they are ready to learn more about the career(s) represented.

Work your way through the following Writing Process Checklist as you develop your own personal statement:

### Pre-Write:

To kick off the writing process, reflect on what makes you unique by jotting responses to at least half of the following prompts:

- What is one thing you wish more people knew about you?
- Describe a moment you overcame fear.
- Describe a moment when you felt successful.
- Describe a moment where you felt failure.
- What current issue are you passionate about?
- Describe a moment or an experience that changed your perspective on the world.
- Describe a moment when you stood up for someone or something.
- Describe a moment when you felt like you didn't belong.
- Describe a moment where you felt like you were a part of something great.
- Choose a book that made you think deeply or challenged you positively. What effect has it had on your life? Why?
- Describe a hobby or activity that helped you through a difficult time in your life. How did engaging in this hobby or activity help you?

### Draft:

Once you're used to thinking about yourself, it's time to begin your personal statement!

It's important to note that colleges and universities have various requirements when it comes to personal statements. Many (but not all) use the Common App essay prompts, which can be accessed at [commonapp.org/apply/essay-prompts](https://commonapp.org/apply/essay-prompts).

Take a moment to review the Common App prompts or read through the prompt(s) required by another college of your choice. Then select one prompt that is meaningful to you and would allow you to tell an important part of your story.

Once you have a prompt selected, grab a computer, tablet, or a piece of paper and pencil (however you write best!) and begin your first draft.

As you write, keep the following tips in mind:

- Make sure you answer the prompt!
- Set yourself apart from the crowd.
- Provide enough background so that your essay is clear to people who don't already know you.

### Revise:

When your first draft is complete, reread what you have written as you consider how to make it stronger and more impactful. Add, substitute, delete, clarify thoughts, and/or move ideas and words around as you rework your piece. Be sure to consider if you:

- Effectively address the prompt question.
- Wrote the opening in a way that captures the audience's attention.

- Use powerful words, descriptive imagery, and concrete details to make your piece come alive.
- Vary the lengths of your sentences in order to keep things interesting.
- Make sure there is a clear beginning, middle, and end.
- Let your personality shine through! Ensure the statement is true to your voice and gives the reader a clear picture of who you are.

### **Edit:**

Editing is the process of polishing your piece. For this phase, it can be helpful to get a second opinion to make sure there are no errors that you overlooked. You can work together to give your personal statement a couple more thorough reviews in order to make sure it:

- Meets all of the application's requirements.
- Flows smoothly and logically from one idea to the next.
- Is free of mechanical, grammar, punctuation, and spelling errors.
- Showcases you as clearly and positively as possible.

### **Submit:**

Once you have completed all the writing stages and you are proud of your work, you have successfully finished your first personal statement! Whenever you are ready, add it to the rest of your application. You are now one step closer to hitting "submit" and officially applying to college!

## Step 1:

Most colleges and universities have online Career Centers with resources dedicated to networking. See if you can find the Career Center of a university that interests you and/or check out the following websites:

- University of Maryland: [tinyurl.com/59ft7fht](http://tinyurl.com/59ft7fht)
- University of Connecticut: [tinyurl.com/53jsc5m6](http://tinyurl.com/53jsc5m6)
- University of Michigan: [tinyurl.com/sedd6](http://tinyurl.com/sedd6)
- Boston College: [tinyurl.com/yj9w9msf](http://tinyurl.com/yj9w9msf)
- University of Washington: [tinyurl.com/25sxtwa4](http://tinyurl.com/25sxtwa4)

As you do, look for tips and information on what to do before, during, and after a networking conversation and take notes in the space provided.

Before: How to prepare for a networking meeting	During: What to do during a networking conversation	After: What to do after the networking meeting

## Step 2:

Now consider your future academic and career goals. Where may you find networking opportunities to help you work toward these ambitions? Think about people who you already know, such as your friends' parents, family friends, and teachers—or other students and/or adults you have met through internships, jobs, social media, clubs, or other organizations. Begin to make a list of them below:

- |         |         |
|---------|---------|
| ✓ _____ | ✓ _____ |
| ✓ _____ | ✓ _____ |
| ✓ _____ | ✓ _____ |

## Step 3:

Choose one person from the list above with whom you could practice networking. Then use the following page to create a plan of *how* to network with this person. Use the notes you recorded above as you decide how you will reach out to them, what you will speak with them about, and how you will respectfully follow up, thank them for their time, and stay connected.

I will network with: \_\_\_\_\_

Goal(s): From this meeting, I hope to:

Steps to Prepare:

Specific questions to ask and/or tips to keep in mind during the conversation:

How I will follow up on our meeting: